



PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE, NAVAL AIR STATION LAKEHURST, N.J.
Phone: Oldfield 7-4411 EXTENSION #620 - AFTER 4:30 EXT. #308

NAVY LAUNCHES COD PROJECT

The U.S. Navy and the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries today marked a first as they cooperated in a joint oceanographic project.

Utilising two airships from the Airship Test and Development Department of the Lakehurst Naval Air Station, nearly 1000 drift bottles were dropped over coastal waters from Sandy Hook, New Jersey to Chincoteague Bay, Virginia in an operation designed to secure information about surface coastal currents to be used in research on cod spawning in these waters.

Several hundred of these bottles are expected to be recovered along the coast. Inside the bottle, beachcombers will discover a return postcard and a message asking the finder to mail the postcard, filled out with information as to the location, to the Woods Hole Biological Laboratory. A reward of 50¢ will be paid for each card that is returned.

From the information compiled from the returned cards, the fishery service hopes to be able to chart the speed and direction of surface currents above the continental shelf. Knowledge of these currents will prove of great value to the Navy, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, and other maritime industries.

The information gained from this project will find its particular application in a study of the journey of cod eggs. After cod have spawned, the eggs will float to the surface of the water and be swept away by currents.

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At present, the fisheries bureau is uncertain as to the ultimate destination of the eggs. If the eggs remain in coastal waters then all is well, for the eggs will hatch and the cod will be able to swim down through the comparatively shallow (up to 600 ft.) depth of the continental sea and seek their habitat on the bottom.

If on the other hand a suspicion of the Bureau proves true and some of the eggs, after being swept southward by the surface are carried out to deep water by a seaward current at Cape Hatteras, N.C.; then many of the young cod will die and therefore be lost to the fishing industry.

The speed and direction of surface currents will vary from year to year, so that the number and location of the surviving cod will also change. Through

formation gathered from this and future projects, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries hopes to plot these changes, and thus eventually to be able to predict what the cod catch will be 3-4 years in advance. This should prove a great boon to cod fishermen.

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